[IMAGE]

Is It Safe to Work During Pregnancy?

Women are increasingly working outside of the home while they're pregnant. After all, there is no such thing as a "free lunch." But while the effects of work on both the mother and the unborn child are unclear, maternal work in the third trimester of pregnancy has been suggested to raise the risks for preterm delivery, low birth weight, and "pre-eclampsia" - a potentially fatal condition involving increased blood pressure and abnormal swelling.

To determine if working during pregnancy affects blood pressure and pre-eclampsia risk, the authors of a recent study in the *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* evaluated nearly 1,000 expectant mothers in Dublin, Ireland. The women were divided into three groups based on work status: currently working; not working; or normally working, but not currently employed. Blood pressure was measured between the 18th and 24th weeks of pregnancy.

Women currently working were almost five times more likely to develop pre-eclampsia than nonworking women. Working women also had higher average daytime blood pressures than nonworking women. Women who had worked, but were not currently working, were still approximately three times more likely to suffer from pre-eclampsia than nonworkers, although their blood pressures were similar to those of the nonworkers.

If you are currently pregnant or plan to be in the future, talk to your doctor about ways to avoid pre-eclampsia and other conditions that can strike during pregnancy. If you must work while pregnant, try to avoid stressful situations, long hours, and added responsibilities.

Reference:

Higgins JR, Walshe JJ, Conroy RM, et al. The relation between maternal work, ambulatory blood pressure, and pregnancy hypertension. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* 2002:56, pp. 389-393.

For more studies on keeping healthy while pregnant, check out http://www.chiroweb.com/find/archives/women/pregnancy/index.html.

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